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Tshombe, Moise

One-way Trip

Five months ago the Congolese Government offered exiled Moise Tshombe a free airplane ticket home to stand trial for treason. And though the deal included an equally free return trip on the off-chance he was found not guilty, the for-



Marianne Tahl

Boumedienne: The struggle goes on

mer Congolese Premier understandably turned down the offer. The trial was held anyway and Tshombe sentenced to death in absentia. Last week it appeared that Tshombe was at long last to take his trip home—against his will, and with slim chance indeed for a round trip.

Tshombe's trip really began late last month, when he was kidnaped in mid-air while flying from Ibiza to the Spanish island of Majoreca. Tshombe was flown to Algeria and arrested (NEWSWEEK, July 17). Congolese demands for his extradition were turned over to Algeria's Supreme Court. And last week the heavily guarded court met behind closed doors to decide his fate.

When the courtroom doors swung open again, Tshombe stood before the judges wearing a blue suit, a red tie, red specks and a grim look. "I have been received by General de Gaulle and this displeased the imperialists . . . I'm the victim of a CIA plot," Tshombe pleaded. "If you deliver me into the hands of the Congolese Government, I will accept your decision. I am a man, I

am a Chief of State. I will go. But the responsibility for my fate will rest with this court."

But the court was in no mood for pleas. Rejecting a defense contention that Tshombe's crimes were purely political, Supreme Court president Ould Aoudia decreed that Algerian justice could not condone "murder and theft"—this a reference to Tshombe's alleged role in the murder of Patrice Lumumba and to charges that Tshombe skipped the Congo with millions of dollars in government funds. With that the Supreme Court ordered the African strong man extradited to the Congo.

Sidekicks: Just how and when Tshombe will be returned home is likely to be kept secret to prevent rescue attempts by his old sidekicks—the white mercenaries and Katangan troops. Their rebellion after Tshombe's kidnaping was the signal for weeks of bloody battle in the Congo, and last week at least 100 rebels were reported to be still holding out at a jungle plantation south of Kisangani.

Almost the only hope remaining for Tshombe is the possibility that Congo President Joseph Mobutu might commute the sentence. And some U.S. officials have privately advised Mobutu that rather than execute Tshombe, it might be more "prudent" to keep him under house arrest. Mobutu finds it hard to agree. "For us," he declared last week, "Tshombe is a dead man."

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Tshombe enters Algerian courtroom